

Fragment of the Month: November 2007

An Arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch (T-S Ar.1a.136)

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Among the 192,844 folios of the Taylor-Schechter Collection, only three Samaritan texts written in Samaritan or Arabic script have been discovered so far. This is not surprising since the Genizah was part of the Ben-Ezra synagogue which belonged to the rabbanite Jewish community. Since both communities had their own synagogues and lived their lives separately from each other, Samaritan documents in the Genizah are somewhat an exotic discovery.

The fragment T-S Ar.1a.136 comprises the Arabic translation of Genesis 4:4–15. The text is carefully written in a beautiful Arabic script with sporadic vocalisation. The text of Genesis 4:9a (line 9 recto) is written in Samaritan square script.

The right column is the text of the Arabic translation; the left column shows the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) to facilitate a comparison between the Hebrew source text and the Arabic translation.

[1] **الله علي هابيل وعلي هديته وعلي قاين وعلي هديته**

[2] لم يَعْطِفْ فَاشْتَدَّ عَلَيَّ قَايِنُ جَدًّا وَذِ [هَبْ مَا وَجْهَ] هـ

[3] فقال الله لقائين لم استد عليك ولم ذهب

[4] مَا وَجْهَكَ الْيَسَّانُ يَحْسُنُ فَرْفَعُهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ

[5] يَحْسُنْ فَبَابِ الْخَطَا أَرْبَعُ وَالْيَكْ مَرْجَعُهُ

[6] وانت المستولي عليه فقال قايّن لهابيل اخيه

[7] نمضى الى الصحرا وكان عند كَوْنُهما فى الصحراءِ

[8] قام قايين الى هابيل اخيه فقتله

ምጽሐፍ ረዕሰ ጽሑፍ ነጥብ ረዕሰ ጽሑፍ ላሳይገኝ [9]

[10] وقـ[ال] الله لقائين اين هابيل اخيك فقال ما

(4:4) יהוה אל הבל ואל מנחתו (4:5) ואל קין ואל מנחתו

לא שעה ויחר לקין מאד ויפלו פניו

(4:6) ויאמר יהוה אל קין למה חרה לך ולמה נפלו

פניך ^(4:7)הלוא אם תטיב שאת ואם לא

תטיב לפתח חטאת רבץ ואליך תשוקתו

ואתה תמשל בו (4:8) ויאמר קין אל הבל אחיו

נלכה השדה ויהי בהיותם בשדה

וַיִּקְרָא קַיִן אֶל הָאֵל הָאֶחָד וַיְהַרְגֵהוּ^(4:9) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל קַיִן אֵיךְ הָבַל אָחִיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא

The text clearly demonstrates that we have a Samaritan translation in front of us. The first reason is obvious: in line 9, the heading of the following section 'The Lord said to Cain: Where is Abel, our brother?' is written in Samaritan square script. Moreover, the Samaritan Hebrew text shows the characteristic איה as opposed to the Masoretic Text אַ, both meaning 'where?' Another Samaritan

manuscript (MS Arabe 5) from the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, shows a similar heading before the section Genesis 4:9–16, though slightly shorter: ‘Where is Abel, your brother?’

The other reason is not so obvious at first sight. Whereas in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 4:8 reads ‘Cain said to Abel, his brother. And it happened when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and killed him’, the Samaritan version also quotes Cain’s address to his brother: ‘Let us go to the field’ (line 7). Cain’s speech נלכה השדה is also represented in the Arabic translation: نمضى الي الصحرا.

The literal Arabic translation of this fragment is similar to MS Nablus (Synagogue) 6 and MS. Arabe 5 of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. However, it does not show a close relationship towards either of them, but demonstrates an independent rendering.

Bibliography

H. Shehadeh, *The Arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch* (Publications of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Section of Humanities), Jerusalem 1989.

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